

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A material comprising ~~a mass of loose, essentially individual~~ particles, each particle comprising a silica sand grain coated with an elastomeric coating material, wherein the coating material comprises a thermoplastic polymer having a melt index of 20-40 g/10 min and Shore A hardness of 40-90.

2. (previously presented) A material according to claim 1, wherein the coating comprises 2-8% by weight of the silica sand.

3. (previously presented) A material according to claim 1, wherein the coating comprises 4-6% by weight of the silica sand.

4. (previously presented) A material according to claim 1, wherein the silica sand grains are of an overall diameter in the range of 0.1 mm to 2 mm.

5. (previously presented) A material according to claim 1, wherein the melt index is 25-35 g/10 min.

6. (previously presented) A material according to claim 1, wherein the Shore A hardness is 50-80.

7. (previously presented) A material according to claim 1, further comprising a coupling agent provided between the silica sand grains and the elastomeric coating material, so as to improve the binding between the grain and the coating material.

8. (original) A material according to claim 7, wherein said coupling agent is selected from the group consisting of

bifunctional silane comprising a reactive amino group and a hydrolyzable inorganic triethoxysilyl group,

terpolymer comprising glycidyl methacrylate (GMA) groups, and

terpolymer comprising maleic anhydride (MAH) groups.

9. (withdrawn, currently amended) A method of producing a loose, particulate, coated bulk material, comprising the steps of

mixing a thermoplastic polymer with silica sand heated to a temperature between about 200-300°C,

adding a predetermined amount of water to the mixture so formed with continued mixing, and

directing air through the mixture so as to lower its temperature, wherein the thermoplastic polymer has a melt index of 20-40 g/10 min and Shore A hardness of 40-90.

10-18. (cancelled)

19. (previously presented) A sports surface comprising a loose, particulate material according to claim 1.

20. (original) A sports surface according to claim 19, further comprising a pile fabric which is at least partly submerged in a layer of said loose particulate material.

21-22. (cancelled)

23. – 45 (cancelled)

46. (new) The material of claim 1, wherein the coating material has a melt index of 20-40 g/10 min and Shore A hardness of 40-90.

47. (new) A material comprising loose particles, each particle comprising a silica sand grain coated with an elastomeric coating material, wherein the coating material consists essentially of a thermoplastic polymer having a melt index of 20-40 g/10 min and Shore A hardness of 40-90.

48. (new) The material of claim 47, further comprising a coupling agent provided between the silica sand grains and the elastomeric coating material, so as to improve the binding between the grain and the coating material.